



RESOLUTION

**REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK TO DESIGNATE AND ESTABLISH
ADDITIONAL VOTER SERVICE CENTERS FOR THE 2020 ELECTIONS.**

WHEREAS, in 2019, Hawaii adopted Act 136, Session Laws of Hawaii 2019, requiring all elections statewide to be conducted by mail beginning with the 2020 primary election; and

WHEREAS, since the 2020 primary election will be the first election in which the majority of Hawaii's voters will be sent ballots to vote by mail, many voters will likely have questions about the process, want to turn in their ballots in person, or want to register and vote on the same day; and

WHEREAS, the new vote-by-mail law provides that the Voter Service Centers (VSCs) will be open for a limited amount of time from the tenth business day preceding an election through the day of the election to receive personal delivery of mail-in ballots, accommodate voters with special needs, offer same day registration and voting, address any problems that may arise from the inaugural implementation of the brand-new voting system, and provide other voting-related services; and

WHEREAS, since a brand-new voting system will be in place, it is reasonable to anticipate that issues may arise, including voters not receiving their ballots in the mail or receiving their ballots too late to return the ballots by mail in time for their votes to be counted; and

WHEREAS, it is of utmost importance that the City and County of Honolulu ("City") is prepared to promptly address any issues that arise so that voters are not disenfranchised and election results are not questioned or legally challenged; and

WHEREAS, having an insufficient number of VSCs open for a limited period of time to resolve issues may result in voter disenfranchisement and challenges to the election results; and

WHEREAS, limited access to VSCs has a greater impact to those voters living in rural areas who may have to drive far distances to exercise their right to vote, may need to ask questions about the vote-by-mail process, or may need to resolve other issues that arise due to no fault of their own; and

WHEREAS, the City's Office of the Clerk has indicated that the following will be available for voters who do not wish to or cannot cast their ballots by mail in 2020:



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- (1) Two VSCs for the City, one each located at Honolulu Hale in downtown Honolulu and Kapolei Hale in Kapolei; and
- (2) Eight drop-box locations in Waianae, Laie, Pearl City, Kapolei Hale, Mililani, Honolulu Hale, Windward Mall, and Hawaii Kai; and

WHEREAS, having only two VSCs open for just a short time before the 2020 primary and general elections is insufficient to resolve potential issues and greatly inhibits voters' access to information and resources, inhibits their ability to cast their ballots, and may discourage election participation rather than bolster it; and

WHEREAS, Section 11-109, Hawaii Revised Statutes, provides that the Office of the Clerk of each county may designate and establish additional locations for VSCs to service the particular needs of a county's voters; and

WHEREAS, the public's trust and confidence in elections provides the basis for a healthy election system and a robust democracy, and for the initial implementation of the new vote by mail balloting system, the City should have a strong foundation in place to ensure the election and voting process is fair and reasonable; and

WHEREAS, for many voters, the services they need to vote privately and independently are available at polling sites and are more challenging to access via mail, including such voters as those with disabilities, needing language assistance, living in rural areas, and registering on the day they vote; and

WHEREAS, the City has received approximately \$387 million in federal funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ("CARES") Act signed into law on March 27, 2020, to help fund the unanticipated costs of fighting the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of the Treasury issued guidance on April 22, 2020 regarding CARES Act funding, stating that payments may be used to cover costs that are:

1. Necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19;
2. Not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the state or local government; and



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3. Incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that it requests the City's Office of the Clerk to designate and establish additional Voter Service Centers at appropriate locations for the 2020 elections based upon the particular needs of the county's voters and utilizing CARES Act funding to the extent allowed by law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that consideration be given to staffing the VSCs with trained volunteers from non-partisan civic organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Office of the Clerk is requested to provide a report in writing to the Council's Committee on Executive Matters and Legal Affairs on or before the Committee's meeting scheduled for June 16, 2020; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Mayor, the Elections Division of the Office of the Clerk of the City and County of Honolulu, and the City Clerk.

INTRODUCED BY:

Carol Johnson
Chen D. K. K. K.

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

MAY 28 2020

Honolulu, Hawaii

Councilmembers